

Council, the President's Office, and Forest Department for permission to work in the Impenetrable Forest.

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Thomas M. Butynski and Jan Kalina, Impenetrable Forest Conservation Project,
Zoology Department, Makerere University, Box 7062, Kampala, Uganda

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First nest record, and other notes, for the Scaly-breasted Illadopsis *Trichastoma albipectus*

Although the Scaly-breasted Illadopsis *Trichastoma albipectus* is one of the more common, tame and vocal bird species in the rainforests of eastern Zaïre, southern Sudan, Uganda and western Kenya, its drab coloration and the dense undergrowth in which it occurs, make it difficult to observe. There are apparently no breeding records for *T. albipectus* and its nest and egg remain undescribed (Chapin 1953, Mackworth-Praed & Grant 1960, Brown & Britton 1980). On 25 November 1983 I found the nest and eggs of this species at Kanyawara, Kibale Forest, western Uganda (0°34'N, 30°21'E) at an altitude of 1500 m.

I saw a small brown bird perch briefly at a height of 1 m and then drop to the ground. Searching the area, I flushed the bird off its nest. It was subsequently flushed several more times during my other visits to the site. I was able to approach to 1 m of the incubating adult and place my hand to within 15 cm of it. The bird would flit from the nest suddenly, land about 1 m away and move on the ground, disappearing into the dense undergrowth. When I moved away from the nest the adult returned within a few minutes. It never flew to the nest but rather walked in from several metres away. Although I observed the bird clearly on the nest several times, it was not possible to view its underparts. On 27 November I mist-netted an adult at the nest and made positive identification prior to releasing it.

The nest was located in primary forest at the bottom of a large valley. Here there was a dense ground cover of ferns and large forbs (e.g., *Palisota schweinfurthii*, *Pollea condensata*, *Piper capensis*, *Aframomum* sp.) to a height of about 80 cm. The understory was fairly open while the middle and upper stories were well developed, creating dense shade on the ground. The most common tree species were *Celtis durandii*, *Olea welwitschii* and *Strombosia scheffleri*. The nest was under a small fern in a slight indentation on damp, but not wet, ground. It was a loose, shallow structure of brown, damp, rotting tree leaves (mostly those of *Teclea nobilis* and *Bosqueia phoberos*) lined with dead leaves of *C. durandii*. A few rootlets had been placed at the bottom of the nest cup. A large fallen *P. schweinfurthii* leaf prevented access to the nest from one side as well as providing some shelter from rain. The nest was extremely well concealed. The nearest

tree was a medium sized *C. durandii* 1.1 m away. A 3-m wide, 0.5-m high boulder was situated 0.7 m from the nest. Two eggs were present. Both were white, blotched light to dark brown. The blotching was densest towards the broad end of the egg. The nests and eggs have been described for three other species of *Trichastoma*—*T. cleaveri*, *T. fulvescens* and *T. rufipennis* (Chapin 1953, Mackworth-Praed & Grant 1960, J. Skorupa, pers. comm.). These three species also make nests of dead leaves on or near the ground, and lay two eggs which are whitish (or pinkish white) and blotched. On 11 December two nestlings were found in the nest. They had a light covering of dark grey down and the primaries were starting to come in. When the nest was next visited on 19 December the nestlings were gone, presumably victims of a predator. The nest remained intact, however.

On 16 December 1983, at another site in Kibale Forest, I clearly observed one fledgling *T. albipectus* moving with two foraging, calling, adults. This trio was watched off and on for more than an hour. I estimated that the fledgling had hatched in October or November.

Four species of *Trichastoma* occur in East Africa (*T. albipectus*, *T. fulvescens*, *T. pyrrhopterum*, *T. rufipennis*). All are insectivorous and confined to the undergrowth of rainforests. Combining the data from this note with those in Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1960), Friedmann (1966), Friedmann & Williams (1970), Britton (1980), and Taylor (1983), there are 25 'breeding records' for this genus in East Africa (i.e., the observations of eggs, nestlings, fledglings, enlarged gonads). The distribution of the estimated egg-laying dates is as follows: 5 in November, 1 in December, 1 in February, 9 in April, 8 in May, 1 in July. Although these data are limited, it may be significant to note that 24 of the 25 breeding observations occurred during the seven months from November to May, and primarily during the second half of the two wettest periods (i.e., November–December and April–May). These are apparently periods of relatively high insect abundance in many East African rainforests (Brown & Britton 1980, Nummelin 1986). Chapin's (1953) data for *Trichastoma* spp. in the Ituri Forest of Zaïre also suggest breeding centred on the two wet seasons.

From November 1983 to September 1984 I made more than 50 observations of *T. albipectus* in Kibale Forest which are summarized below.

Chapin (1953) describes the call of *T. albipectus* in the northern Ituri and Semliki Forests as three to five distinct, short, ascending whistles introduced by one or two low chirps or clucks, audible only at close range. This is a good description of one of the two calls I heard given by this species in Kibale. Call 1 is comprised of two loud, liquid, high-pitched, drawn-out peeps (*peeeeeeep-peeeeeeep*). This call is given by foraging, possibly immature, birds and can be heard by the human ear at a distance of at least 100 m. It was heard on only two occasions; on one of these, it was repeated about five times at intervals of approximately 30 s.

In contrast to Call 1, Call 2 is frequently heard and exhibits considerable intra- and inter-individual variation. This is the call described by Chapin (1953). It consists of one to three soft, squeaky chirps (*twit*) followed by one to four loud, lively, high-pitched whistles (*tweee*). The first whistle seems to begin as a chirp but immediately becomes a whistle (*twittweee*). Occasionally a soft *wheet* is given about 2 s prior to the chirps. Calls with *wheets*, multiple chirps and/or one or four whistles are uncommon. The most

frequently heard call is one chirp plus two or three whistles. The entire call lasts about 2 s and can be rendered *twit—twittweee-tweee-tweeee* (where each ‘-’ represents about 0.2 s). Of the variations notes, the shortest is *twit—twittweee* while the longest and most complex is *wheet————twir————wheet————twit—twittweee-tweee-tweeee*. The total time covered by this last call is about 7 or 8 s.

Each note of Call 2 is louder than the preceding one. The whistles are much louder than the chirps. The last note is unexpectedly loud for such a small bird. The human ear can hear the chirps and *wheets* up to a distance of about 50 m, and the last whistle up to 200 m. Thus, the closer one gets to the caller the more of its call one hears. Determining the direction of the caller becomes difficult beyond 100 m. It is common for one *T. albipectus* to repeat Call 2 every 5–35 s (usually every 6–16 s) for more than 1 h. This call is usually given while the bird moves continuously about foraging, but one preening, stationary bird was seen calling for 5 min from the top of a 10-cm high mound.

In Kibale Forest, five or more *T. albipectus* are sometimes heard giving Call 2 at the same time and often they seem to be counter-calling. When one bird begins calling others seem to be stimulated to start calling also. Call 2 is most often given during the 3–4 h after dawn but may be heard during all daylight hours.

During each month, for nearly one year (November 1983 to September 1984), calling *T. albipectus* were noted at several specific locations. It appears that these birds are resident and calling on territories and/or home ranges year-round. Callers may be within 5 m of one another and seem to confine their activities to an area of 0.8–1.2 ha. Two of these sites were revisited in October 1987 and calling individuals were still present.

Members of this species were usually seen alone, in pairs, or in groups of three. The largest group observed numbered four. On at least two occasions when three birds were together (less than 5 m from one another), two were adults and one was immature. These observations suggest that *T. albipectus* moves in family groups and that flocks of unrelated conspecifics may not occur.

T. albipectus does most of its foraging on the ground but sometimes moves up to a height of 2 m for a horizontal distance of 10 m or more. When foraging, the birds frequently flip over leaves with their bills and occasionally scratch the ground with their feet in search of invertebrates. In Kibale Forest, this species is common in valley bottoms, on hillsides and on ridge tops. It is difficult to say which of these locations is preferred. What seems more important in terms of habitat selection is that there should be a thick ground layer and/or understory. Exposed ground, even a narrow footpath, is avoided or quickly flown over.

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- Thomas M. Butynski, Kibale Forest Project, Box 409, Fort Portal, Uganda; present address: Impenetrable Forest Conservation Project, Zoology Department, Makerere University, Box 7062, Kampala, Uganda.

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First record of the Shoebill *Balaeniceps rex* in Malawi

On 7 February 1988 one of us (MR) observed a Shoebill *Balaeniceps rex* standing on the track next to a dam near Chelinda (10°35'S, 33°48'E), Nyika National Park, at an altitude of about 2200 m. It was a dull, cloudy morning with slight drizzle, following days of rain, but the bird was clearly seen, between 06:20 and 06:45, from a distance of 10 m, despite the poor light. The record has been accepted by the Malawi Rareities Committee.

The immediate impression was of a large (about 1 m high), dark grey stork with black wing tips. As it was wet, it may have appeared darker than it in fact was. It had a broad head and a short, thick neck which was held hunched between the shoulders, but its most striking character was the bill. This was horn-coloured, fairly short and extremely broad, being about two-thirds as wide as it was long, with a ridge running down the centre from the forehead to the hooked tip. The legs were long and thin, with prominent 'knee' joints and were dark coloured, although with a possible pink tinge.

After standing stationary for 20 min, the bird stretched its neck, moved slowly to the bank at the side of the road and nuzzled the grass, whereupon the observer departed. No photographs were taken since, the weather being what it was, the camera had been left at home.

That the first definite record of a Shoebill in Malawi should come from the Nyika Plateau is somewhat strange, since the habitat there is hardly suitable for the species. However, there have been previous and later sightings of possible or probably Shoebills in Liwonde National Park (c. 14°50'S, 34°20'E), where the dense reed and papyrus marshes round Lake Malombe and along the edge of the Shire River constitute ideal habitat.

In September 1987 an observer obtained a fleeting glimpse of a possible Shoebill in